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Issue

Lacey Thaler Reilly Wilson Architecture & Preservation, LLP

St. Anthony's Church » Schenectady, New York

The principal design challenge was the integration of the restoration of the building after a fire with the current liturgical directives of the Roman Catholic Church. Programmatic enhancements included better accessibility for all worshipers, all new HVAC, lighting, and sound systems, a new sacristy, and a restroom accessible during liturgical and other events. All surfaces of the church required the restoration of finishes.

Liturgical changes included moving the altar table, ambo, and presider's chair closer to the assembly. All new ritual furnishings were custom designed and fabricated. Shifting these pieces forward allowed the creation of a reservation chapel directly behind the altar table in the apse of the church. The space is accessible to everyone for the purposes of private prayer and devotion. This chapel is separated from the nave of the church with a movable wrought iron screen decorated with gilded Eucharistic symbols—wheat and grapes. The screen is left open before and after the liturgy to highlight the tabernacle. The gates are rolled closed during the liturgy and the lights in the chapel are dimmed to focus attention on the altar table. A new reconciliation room was incorporated into the restoration plan contiguous to the devotional chapel.

The other major liturgical innovation was the installation of a custom-designed baptismal font. The octagonal font is located in the midst of the nave along the main aisle to allow for more participation by the assembly during baptisms. It also reminds congregants of their own initiation into the Church. Numerous murals, sculptures, and the original wood ceiling and trusses were restored; three stained glass windows in the apse were recreated; and new murals and a unifying decorative painting scheme were created. All works of art are highlighted appropriately with the new lighting system.

Jury Comments

This restoration carefully includes liturgical updating, particularly the sensitive location of the font. Aesthetically it is true to the architecture, and makes some welcomed liturgical improvements. The coordination of the elements in this liturgical space makes the project rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the fire.

Architect

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Liturgical Design Consultant
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Lighting Designer

Lilker Associates

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